Improving K-12 Student Outcomes: An Interdisciplinary Examination of Problems and Solutions Regarding Resources, Leadership, Teaching and Community.

URPL 6800-002 | 40140 | CLDE 5835 | PAUF 6600-5

Co-Instructors

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Kara Mitchell Viesca, PhD</th>
<th>Robert Reichardt, PhD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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NOTE: The course is open to graduate and undergraduate students. Readings and assignments will be adjusted to reflect the student’s educational program and needs.

Course Description and learning objectives:

The essential question guiding the learning and cross-disciplinary inquiry for this course is: How do we improve K-12 student outcomes by examining opportunities and challenges for improvement from three different lenses: accountability, student-centered learning, and community? This course will be co-constructed and taught from three distinct disciplinary perspectives: urban planning (community and schools), education (student-centered learning), and public policy (accountability). The instructor collaborators share an interest in education policy and practice, but come at the important issues related to improving K-12 student outcomes, from different disciplinary and theoretical perspectives. Therefore, this course will provide the opportunity for students (at any level – undergrad through doctoral level) to explore four important factors related to improving K-12 student outcomes: resources, leadership, teaching and parent/community involvement from the three disciplinary perspectives listed above, grounded in prominent frameworks from each discipline.

The course is inquiry and solution oriented by examining prominent frameworks from the three disciplines in their relationship to resources, leadership, teaching and parent/community involvement. With this approach the following learning outcomes will be reached:

- Understand issues/challenges in public schooling today related to improving student outcomes.
- Understand the perspectives of the community schools model.
- Understand the perspectives of the standards of effective pedagogy as a student-centered teaching model.
- Understand the perspectives of a portfolio model for school governance and accountability.
- Apply the understandings of these three models to examine four important elements related to improving K-12 student outcomes: resources, leadership, teaching and parent/community involvement.
- Understand the various theories of actions, problem identifications and responses from the three different disciplinary models.
- Apply understandings of the varying perspectives on important issues related to improving K-12 student outcomes by identifying specific problems as well as solutions to those problems based on an interdisciplinary perspective that takes multiple features of the various models into account.
Course Rationale:

Education improvement and reform is a major focus in today’s society across a variety of stakeholders and interest groups. However, rarely is work done to explore the opportunities related to improving K-12 student learning outcomes from interdisciplinary perspectives or across various theoretical and conceptual orientations. This course will provide students with a unique opportunity to collaborate with professors from varied disciplines, backgrounds and perspectives as well as to learn from members of the extended networks these professors engage in by interviewing and learning from stakeholders across education sectors locally, nationally, and internationally (i.e. with researchers and educators in Finland, Germany, Singapore and Shanghai). By exploring important education related challenges and opportunities from varying perspectives with the opportunity to collaboratively seek solutions and engage with education experts across disciplines here locally, nationally and internationally, students will develop the skills and dispositions necessary to engage with complex education related issues from a variety of perspectives with an orientation towards meaningful solutions. Regardless of what career or educational plans students have, the learning from this course will help them engage from a more informed and critical perspective related to educational challenges in today’s world.

Course format

The instruction in this course will follow a flipped model where rigorous learning opportunities from multimedia resources will be offered through the online shell in Canvas and our time together in class each week will be focus on collaborative explorations and applications of the ideas presented in the online resources. Together, the community will collaborate to deeply understand the topics under investigation as well as apply them into real world contexts focused on collaborative efforts to discover meaningful solutions.

The major course assignment will involve co-constructing interview protocols for members of the class to utilize as they discuss the topics and issues under investigation with various educators and education stakeholders locally, statewide, nationally, and internationally. Each student will interview 2 or more stakeholders. The interviews will each be taped and presented as resources for the entire class community to examine. Students will be organized into collaborative working groups where they will analyze the interviews and write collaborative responses demonstrating their analyses of the interviews and application of course topics into understanding the various perspectives captured in the interviews. This will also provide an opportunity for the collaborative working groups to identify a problem surfaced in the interviews with education stakeholders, examine that problem from the variety of perspectives learned about in the class as well as provide some suggested solutions to the problem. Students will present their collaborative group work, and write an individual final paper.

Course Schedule

The class meets on Mondays from 2:00pm to 4:45pm (which includes a 15 minute break), in the Inworks classroom, in the CU Building Annex on 14th street.

Week 1 – Overview of course, expectations, learning outcomes, setting community collaboration norms, etc. Initial introduction to the three major frameworks guiding the exploration of this course (Community Schools model, Standards of Effective Pedagogy, and Portfolio Model) as well as the four overarching elements related to improving K-12 student learning that will be examined from the perspectives asserted by the three major frameworks: resources, leadership, teaching, and parent/community involvement. Review of the problem statements for each perspective. Review of trends in education data.

Weeks 2, 3, 4 (Kara Viesca) – Standards of Effective Pedagogy – after discussing teaching and teachers as well as the challenges with measuring teacher quality and effectiveness, we will explore a pedagogical framework
based in critical sociocultural theory. The six standards of effective pedagogy (joint productive activity, language and literacy development, contextualization, teaching complex thinking, instructional conversations, and critical stance) have strong empirical evidence suggesting their value in terms of improving student learning outcomes. Across the three weeks focused on teaching and teachers, we will explore the challenges and opportunities that exist around this student-centered teaching framework, teacher evaluation and overall notions and measures of quality teaching related to resources, leadership, teaching and parent/community involvement.

Weeks 5, 6, 7 (Robert Reichardt) – Portfolio Model – Learn about this approach to governance, its relationship to improving student learning outcomes, and the challenges and opportunities that exist around this method of governance related to resources, leadership, teaching and parent/community involvement.

Weeks 8, 9, 10 (Carrie Makarewicz)– Community Schools Model – Learn about this continuum related to community engaged schools (the fortress school, the come when we call school, the open door school and the partnership school) and its relationship to improving student learning outcomes, and the challenges and opportunities that exist around these approaches to parent/community involvement in terms of resources, leadership, teaching and parent/community involvement.

Week 11 – Application of three models to examination of local case studies. Guests from local education entities, such as teachers from Mapleton School, the schools & housing program at Boulder Housing Partners and the I Have A Dream Foundation program, Together Colorado, and Greater Education Colorado.

Week 12 – Application of three models to examination of state. Guests from statewide organizations, such as the America’s Promise Collaborative, Cradle to Career Colorado, Colorado Department of Education (Office of Education Effectiveness, Literacy, Culturally and Linguistically diverse, Education Finance), the National Conference of State Legislators, and the Colorado Education Association.

Week 13 – Application of three models to examination of national and international level case studies. We will have Skype discussions with education researchers in other countries, such as Germany, Finland, and Singapore. Other guest speakers will discuss national standards such as Common Core, New Teacher Evaluation Requirements, the PARCC Assessments and Smarter Balance, and the Education Commission of the States (ECS- national association of education policy makers). Other speakers will discuss the national movement for schools and communities, promoted by Center for Cities & Schools, the Broader Bolder Approach, the Economic Policy Institute, and the Coalition for Community Schools.

Week 14 – Groups 1 and 2 – presentation of examination of interviews/suggestion solution to a problem surfaced in the interviews related to resources, leadership, teaching or parent/community involvement.

Week 15 – Group 3 presentation and end of semester potluck– presentation of examination of interviews/suggested solution to a problem surfaced in the interviews related to resources, leadership, teaching or parent/community involvement.
### Schedule at a glance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>In-class</th>
<th>Assignment Due</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8/17</td>
<td>Education Problem Statements from each perspective: Is there a reason to change? Whose in charge of making the change? What does the data say: enrollment, performance, and finance?</td>
<td>Co-construct norms Presentations on perspectives and relationship to policies and practices Explore U.S., state and local education statistics</td>
<td>Background readings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>8/24</td>
<td>Teachers and Teaching</td>
<td>Review of school UIPs</td>
<td>Pre-class response</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>8/31</td>
<td>Measuring Teacher Quality</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-class response</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9/7</td>
<td><strong>LABOR DAY - CLASS DOES NOT MEET</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>9/14</td>
<td>Promising Practices</td>
<td>Application in Mapleton</td>
<td>Pre-class response</td>
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<td></td>
<td>9/14</td>
<td>Education Narrative</td>
<td>Education Narrative</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>9/21</td>
<td>Portfolio: Who runs our schools?</td>
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<td>Pre-class response</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>9/28</td>
<td>Portfolio: Why Accountability?</td>
<td>Discuss cases</td>
<td>Pre-class response Identify case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>10/5</td>
<td>Portfolio: What is the role of districts?</td>
<td>Review of current NAEP data</td>
<td>Pre-class response Interview case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>10/12</td>
<td>Community: why community schools?</td>
<td>Discussion of responses.</td>
<td>Reading journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>10/19</td>
<td>Community: what does the research show?</td>
<td>Compare their education narrative to the research. What gaps remain? What's debatable?</td>
<td>Reading journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>10/26</td>
<td>Community: what are places doing?</td>
<td>Compare NCES data on the schools that are “community schools” to those that aren’t within a district</td>
<td>Reading journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>11/02</td>
<td>Applying the 3 models locally</td>
<td>Guest speakers on local issues OR Field trips</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>11/09</td>
<td>Applying the 3 models statewide</td>
<td>Guest speakers on state issues</td>
<td>Interview video/audio &amp; summaries posted to canvas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>11/16</td>
<td>Applying the 3 models nationally and internationally</td>
<td>Remote speakers on national and international issues</td>
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<td></td>
<td>11/23</td>
<td><strong>THANKSGIVING FALL BREAK – CLASS DOES NOT MEET</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>11/30</td>
<td>Surfaced problems #1</td>
<td>Local findings State findings</td>
<td>Groups 1 &amp; 2 presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11/30</td>
<td>Surfaced problems #2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>12/07</td>
<td>Surfaced problems #3</td>
<td>National &amp; International findings</td>
<td>Group 3 presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>12/14</td>
<td><strong>END OF SEMESTER - CLASS DOES NOT MEET</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Individual case study papers 12/13</td>
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## Assignments and grading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percent of total</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Your education narrative: reflect on the three perspectives in light of your own k-12 schooling. When did you start; what worked for you; what worked for others (siblings, friends, classmates); was the community involved; were you aware of the District?</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>9/14</td>
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<td>2. Identification of a case</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9/28</td>
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<td>3. Development of a protocol and inquiry: students will work collaboratively in and outside of class to develop the protocol and inquiry, but each student will submit his/her own.</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10/05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Plan, conduct, and post interview summaries and recordings with 2 or more stakeholders to canvas</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>11/09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Preparation and delivery of group presentations</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>11/30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Individual case papers</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>12/14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Pre-class and in-class activities</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>weekly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Weekly reflection: how's it going in your group; how's it going in the class; how can you do a better job; what was a highlight, what was a low light</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>weekly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Community contributions (based on co-constructed group norms in the class)</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>weekly</td>
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### Sources for the course

All readings will be posted to canvas or available through the internet. There are no required texts for the course.

The course may take one or two local field trips to educational institutions. Transportation and travel reimbursement will be available if necessary.
**Course Reading list**

**Week 1**
**Readings:**


- Look at data on: finance (amount and source), outcomes, demographics


**In class:**

- How are our students doing?
  - Digest of education statistics, 2015
    https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/current_tables.asp
  - Table 214: Number and percentage distribution of regular public school districts and students, by enrollment size of district: Selected years, 1979-80 through 2012-13
  - Table 222: Average National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) mathematics scale score, by age and selected student characteristics: Selected years, 1973 through 2012
  - Table 235: Revenues for public elementary and secondary schools, by source of funds: Selected years, 1919-20 through 2011-12
  - Table 236: Total expenditures for public elementary and secondary education and other related programs, by function and sub-function: Selected years, 1990-91 through 2011-12

**Week 2: Teachers/Teaching**

**Readings:**

OECD 2014 – a Teacher's Guide to TALIS (Teaching and Learning International Survey)
Hargreaves and Fullan (2012). Professional Capital. Chapters 2 and 3) “Competing views of teaching” and “Stereotypes of Teaching”

**In class:**
• Who are teachers? What do they do? What is their realm of influence? Are they the most important lever for improving student outcomes?

**Week 3: Measuring Teacher Quality**

**Readings:**
Darling-Hammond (2013) – “think systemically” from “getting teacher evaluation right”

**In class:**
• What is quality teaching? How do we measure it? Reward it? Does measurement and reward lead to improved outcomes for kids? What are the complications in measuring teaching? What are some possibilities in measuring quality teaching?

**Week 4: Promising Practices**

**Readings:**

**In class:**
• What is your vision of the ideal classroom? What does it take for a teacher to be able to create that learning environment? Is your vision of the ideal classroom sufficient to improve student learning outcomes? What might get in the way? What might work?

**Week 5: Who Runs Our Schools?**


**Optional readings**


Week 6: Why Accountability
Optional readings

Week 7: What is the role of districts in improving schools?

Week 8: What are community schools and why are they recommended?


Optional readings

Optional: The Equity and Excellence Commission. 2013. For each and every child-a strategy for education equity and excellence. A report to the Secretary of Education. Washington, D.C. 52 pp


Week 9: The evidence: Do community schools and parent engagement work? (51 pages)


Week 9 Optional


**Week 10: Putting it together: Visions, policies, practices, and challenge--why doesn’t everybody do this?**


In class:


**Optional readings for case study research**

Noguera, P. A. (2011). A broader and bolder approach uses education to break the cycle of poverty: making bold assertions that all children can achieve while doing nothing to address the challenges they face is neither fair nor sound public policy. Phi Delta Kappan, 93(3), 8+. Retrieved from [http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA282444056&v=2.1&u=auraria_main&it=r&p=ITOF&sw=w&asid=923427d6c8262cb781b9cfef75ff4f23](http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA282444056&v=2.1&u=auraria_main&it=r&p=ITOF&sw=w&asid=923427d6c8262cb781b9cfef75ff4f23)


Betsy Martens, Boulder Housing Partners. (2015) Within our reach: Housing as the missing Link in Educational Achievement. 42pp


Potapchuk, William R. June 2013. The Role of Community Schools in Place-based Initiatives. Coalition for Community Schools, PolicyLink, West Coast Collaborative, and Institute for Educational Leadership. 36 pp.


